WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing an automated rank bid sale, the method comprising:

transmitting unique identifiers to a plurality of bidders, wherein each identifier is unique to a particular bidder for a particular sale of an auction item;

transmitting a description of the auctioned item to be sold;

receiving a plurality of bids for the item to be sold, wherein each bid is associated with a unique identifier;

ranking the unique identifiers associated with each bid received according to the amount of the associated bid; and

transmitting an indication of the ranked unique identifiers.

2. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 wherein the unique identifier comprises a paddle ID.

3. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 wherein the indication of ranked unique identifiers comprises a tiered ranking.

4. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 wherein an indication of ranked unique identifiers comprises a display ordering the unique identifiers according to the descending value of a most recent bid received that is associated with each unique identifier.

5 The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 wherein the bidder associated with the unique identifier is kept anonymous to other bidders.

6. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 additionally comprising the steps of:

logging in a bidder associated with a unique identifier and additionally associating the bidder with a network access device; and

transmitting to the network access device a visual indicator highlighting the unique identifier associated with the bidder.

7. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 6 wherein the login comprises receiving demographic data descriptive of the bidder.

8. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 additionally comprising the steps of:

generating a communication relating to a particular sale; and

transmitting the communication to the plurality of bidders.

9. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 8 wherein the communication is customized for each bidder according to the bid ranking associated with each bidder.

10. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 9 wherein the communication comprises a solicitation for a subsequent bid.

11. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 additionally comprising the step of recording sale particulars.

12. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 11 wherein the sale particulars recorded comprise bidding patterns associated with a bidder.

13. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1 additionally comprising the step of arranging for payment relating to the sale of the auction item.

14. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1, wherein the auction item comprises at least one of: (i) a product, (ii) a service, (iii) a commercial item, (iv) an institutional item, and (v) a industrial item.

15. The method for an automated rank bid sale of claim 1, further comprising:

determining that the auction item will be sold to a winning bidder; and

arranging for the winning bidder to provide an online payment for the auction item.

16. A computerized system for providing an automated rank bid sale over a distributed network, the system comprising:

a computer server accessible with a network access device via a communications network; and

executable software stored on the server and executable on demand, the software operative with the server to cause the system to:

transmit unique identifiers to a plurality of bidders, wherein each identifier is unique to a particular bidder for a particular sale of an auction item;

transmit a description of the auctioned item to be sold;

receive a plurality of bids for the item to be sold, wherein each bid is associated with a unique identifier;

rank the unique identifiers associated with each bid received according to the amount of the associated bid; and

transmit an indication of the ranked unique identifiers.

17. Computer executable program code residing on a computer-readable medium, the program code comprising instructions for causing the computer to:

transmit unique identifiers to a plurality of bidders, wherein each identifier is unique to a particular bidder for a particular sale of an auction item;

transmit a description of the auctioned item to be sold;

receive a plurality of bids for the item to be sold, wherein each bid is associated with a unique identifier;

rank the unique identifiers associated with each bid received according to the amount of the associated bid; and

transmit an indication of the ranked unique identifiers.

18. A computer data signal embodied in a digital data stream comprising data relating to auctions, wherein the computer data signal is generated by a method comprising the steps of:

transmitting unique identifiers to a plurality of bidders, wherein each identifier is unique to a particular bidder for a particular sale of an auction item;

transmitting a description of the auctioned item to be sold;

receiving a plurality of bids for the item to be sold, wherein each bid is associated with a unique identifier;

ranking the unique identifiers associated with each bid received according to the amount of the associated bid; and

transmitting an indication of the ranked unique identifiers.

19. A computer implemented method for participating in a ranked bid sale, the method comprising:

receiving an anonymous bidder identifier unique for a particular sale of an auction item;

receiving a description of the auctioned item to be sold;

transmitting a bid for the item to be sold, wherein the bid is associated with the anonymous bidder identifier; and

receiving a ranked indication of whether the anonymous identifier is associated with a winning bid relative to other anonymous identifiers.

20. The computer implemented method for participating in a ranked bid sale of claim 19 additionally comprising the steps of:

receiving an electronic communication at a network access device associated with the anonymous bidder identifier; and

transmitting an additional bid responsive to the electronic communication.

21. The computer implemented method for participating in a ranked bid sale of claim 19 additionally comprising the step of receiving an electronic communication indicating that the bid does not meet a minimum threshold bid amount.

22. The computer implemented method for participating in a ranked bid sale of claim 19 wherein the ranked indication comprises multiple anonymous identifiers grouped in tiers, wherein each tier is indicative of a relative standing of a bid associated with each anonymous identifier.

23. The computer implemented method for participating in a ranked bid sale of claim 19 wherein the ranked indication comprises a graphical representation of the relative standing of the anonymous identifiers according to the bids associated with each anonymous identifier.